

**Rancho La Costa
Habitat Conservation Area**

**A Dedicated Natural Open Space System Set Aside As Part
of the La Costa Villages and University Commons Developments**

**Annual Work Plan
October 2003 - September 2004**

Prepared for:
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
California Department of Fish and Game**



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I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This annual year work plan is developed from the guidelines for goals and objectives set forth in the Habitat Management Plan for the La Costa Preserve (now named Rancho La Costa) dated August 2001. The Management Plan includes management requirements agreed to by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game, and additional management activities that the Center feels is appropriate to protect and maintain the natural resources in perpetuity. The Center for Natural Lands Management (hereafter the "Center" or CNLM) holds title to the Rancho La Costa Habitat Conservation Area (Preserve) and performs or oversees the tasks identified in the plan.

The Preserve was created by combining several areas which were dedicated to the Center for long term management from the La Costa Villages and University Commons developments. Specific parcel names have been referred to as the Oaks and Ridge, Greens, Huff, Setter, Wilern, Nelson, Brouwer, Elfin Forest and Winston. At this time (November 2003), the Center only owns ½ of the Preserve, with the remaining parcels due within the next twelve months. From February to about June, 2002, the Center received title to the Oaks and Ridge, Huff, Setter, Wilern and Brouwer parcels. The Nelson property was deeded to the Center in 2001, but the Center has not received the management endowment from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation. All funding has been received from the La Costa Villages project and about ½ the funding has been received for the University Commons project. This work plan assumes that all funds and land will be acquired by the middle of 2004 and that most of the tasks identified will be accomplished.

The purpose of this work plan is to identify the tasks and budget required to complete the management activities for the 2003-2004 management year. The management year is the new fiscal year adopted by the CNLM, and will begin on October 1, 2003 and end on September 30, 2004. Unless otherwise stated, all tasks will be performed by the Center's Preserve Manager, Markus Spiegelberg.

Summary of Tasks and Goals for the 2003-2004 Fiscal Year:

(* required by CDFG and USFWS per the Management Plan; ** required by MHCP management and monitoring plan)

- Replace signs and fix fencing as necessary.
- Monitor the coastal California gnatcatcher population*, other sensitive bird species*, and the entire bird community**.
- Note all animal species observed, and map locations of any sensitive species*.
- Conduct on-the-ground vegetation sampling around sensitive plant species**.
- Conduct pit-fall arrays to document reptile and amphibian species.*
- Remove non-native plant species, especially Tamarisk.*
- Patrol and conduct site enforcement on a regular basis.*
- Lead a community nature walk.

- Report and describe data collected and management actions taken on the Property to the wildlife agencies*.
- Provide an accounting of funds to be spent in the fiscal year*.

Appendix 1 (*2003-2004 Field Schedule*) identifies the approximate schedule of field work throughout the management year. Appendix 2 (*Annual Budget 2003-2004*) provides a financial summary for both person hours and costs for the year. The location of the preserve is mapped in Appendix 3.

II. MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The following sections identify and describe the activities to be performed during the 2003-2004 management year. Based upon the Property Analysis Record (PAR) developed by the Center to outline long-term management tasks and costs, management activities for the Preserve can be broken down into seven large blocks of tasks: Capital Improvements, Biological Surveys, Habitat Restoration, Public Services, Reporting, Office Maintenance, and Operations. Each of these categories will be discussed below.

NOTE: All categories marked with an * are required as per the Management Plan.

A. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The maintenance of fencing and signs are the only capital improvements to be undertaken during the 2003-2004 management year.

1. **Fencing** Fencing and gating will be placed in those locations that it is deemed necessary. A short stretch of fence will be installed from Cadencia Park east to Rancho Santa Fe Road.
2. **Signing** CNLM signs have been posted at all of the major access points to the Preserve and a few other notable locations for the Phase I parcels. The Box Canyon Area, and land to the north of it, is posted "No Trespassing" and the remaining land is posted as permitted, but restricted access. Each sign explains that the Preserve is a dedicated open space, and that OHV activity, mountain biking, dumping and shooting is prohibited. Signs will be placed at all new parcels as they are turned over to the Center.

B. BIOLOGICAL SURVEYS

The general goal of the monitoring activities at the Preserve at this time is to collect inventory data on all plant and animal species at the Preserve, and to begin to develop population trend data on individual species and for certain taxonomic groups. During the 2002 and 2003 field season, data was collected on the bird, small mammal and reptile community. In addition, sensitive plant

surveys and vegetation monitoring was conducted in 2003.

Monitoring will include focused surveys for threatened and endangered species, and for sensitive species that warrant particular attention. Monitoring in the next year will focus on the bird and reptile community. In addition, data will be collected in areas containing annual plant species that are considered sensitive. All data will be entered or stored in GIS and/or MSAccess databases. A brief description of monitoring activities outlined by taxa is provided below:

1. Amphibian and Reptile Monitoring*

Objective: Inventory and determine the distribution of reptile and amphibian species.

During the 2003 fiscal year, 8 pit fall arrays were installed and 7 of these were “run” for three one-week periods to inventory reptile and amphibian species. The MHCP management and monitoring plan calls for 10 arrays within the Rancho La Costa preserve areas. Therefore, the Center will install two more arrays (most likely on the “greens” property). Each array will be opened for five days in a row, during 4 or 5 separate times during the year. The goal is to sample reptiles and amphibians at different times of the year. It is anticipated that surveys will commence in January and go until September or October of 2004. The Preserve Manager has contacted CDFG and has received permission to conduct these surveys and has received a CDFG collecting permit for the work.

2. Small Mammal Monitoring*

Small mammal trapping was conducted during 2002, and will not be conducted again in 2004. Once all inventory data has been collected, a small mammal trapping protocol will be established.

3. California Gnatcatcher & Avifauna Monitoring*

Objective: Track changes in bird species richness.

The goal of avifaunal monitoring is to develop trends in species richness over time. During the 2003 spring breeding season, the Center established 36 point count locations to monitor bird species. The Center created four 50-acre units within the coastal sage scrub and two 50-acre units within the chaparral communities with 6 point per unit. Each point was visited three times. This fall the Center will evaluate this data and determine whether more or less points are needed, and how many surveys are required. But it is likely that this method will be repeated in 2004. In addition, it is likely that one or two more 50-acre units will be created at the “greens” property as no surveys were conducted in these areas in 2003 (still in escrow).

Focused attention will be given to the gnatcatcher and other listed or covered species observed during surveys. As the observer walks from point to point, he will observe, note and map all sensitive species to compare with the bird point count data.

4. Insects

Insect occurrences will be documented during other general or focused surveys.

5. Wildlife Movement Corridors

The MHCP Management and Monitoring Plan and the Habitat Management Plan created for this site call for monitoring potential movement corridors for species that use them. At this time, the main wildlife crossing is at Rancho Santa Fe Road and is not constructed as of yet. Other crossings include the undercrossing at the northern terminus of Box Canyon that lead towards the Brouwer property and along San Elijo Road that connects the Winston property to the Brouwer property. At this time, most of these areas are under some kind of construction and it is felt that waiting to conduct movement studies until all construction is complete is warranted. Therefore, these studies should commence in a year or two.

6. Vegetation Sampling

One of the goals that the Center has for the preserve is to track changes in plant community structure and composition to better understand other changes in the preserve such as animal richness and abundance. In addition, the information collected will provide data on the presence and percent cover of non-native plant species which the Center would like to eliminate or significantly reduce.

There are two general vegetation areas of focus. One is the chaparral and coastal sage scrub communities (the dominant vegetation communities) and the other is within the open grassy area which support a variety of unique, rare and sensitive species. The Center tracks changes in the chaparral and coastal sage scrub communities every 4 to 5 years by using point intercept transects at each bird point location (last completed in 2003). This year the Center will begin to track vegetation variables within the grassy areas that are known to have sensitive plant species within them. This objective is required by the MHCP management and monitoring plan..

Objective: Track changes in the species richness and percent cover of plant species occurring within the native and non-native grassland locations that are known to have sensitive plants species within them.

If there is sufficient rain in 2004, the Center will set up a number of 1 x 1 meter quadrats on the “greens” parcels, and the grassland areas near Cadencia park. These two locations are known to have populations of San Diego thornmint, thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*) and Cleavelands goldenstar (as well as other sensitive annual species). Quadrats will be randomly placed along 50 meter line transects and permanently marked. The

number of transects and quadrats will be determined during the sampling time. Data collected within each quadrat will include species present, and percent cover and abundance of each species.

7. Sensitive Plant Species*

The Preserve hosts over 10 sensitive plant species. The location and abundance of each of these species was mapped and counted in 2003. These surveys will be repeated every three to five years depending on the species. No focused surveys are anticipated.

C. HABITAT RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE

Habitat restoration and enhancement will continue during the 2003-2004 fiscal year. During the 2002 fiscal year, several stands of fennel and eucalyptus were killed, and a patch of pampas grass was sprayed. In 2003 a large stand of Eucalyptus and Acacia (less than 20 feet in height) along Cadencia Street, acacia and pampas near El Fuerte, and non-natives near Rancho Santa Fe Road were removed. In this fiscal year, the main goal will be to remove the large stand of Tamarisk located on the “greens” parcel. This tamarisk stand is about 3 acres and will consume most of our non-native removal monies and time.

If time permits, the Center may create 4 or 5 water “ponds” to create breeding habitat for frogs and toads. Each pond will be created in a disturbed area where we think water can pool, and that is likely to attract these species. Each pond will be less than 500 square feet. The Center will monitor inundation periods and measure depths during the raining season.

D. PUBLIC SERVICES

Activities centering around public services include the patrolling of the Preserve and the response to emergencies. However, other opportunities for public service will undoubtedly be forthcoming during the year, such as a spring nature walk, local groups and individuals interested in volunteering labor for Preserve projects, and class field trips from local schools. Whenever possible management will try to accommodate these activities.

- 1. Patrols** Patrols will be performed approximately once per week, and usually during biological surveys or other preserve activities. In the summer patrols will increase to about three times per week.
- 2. Emergency Response** Hours have been allocated from the current budget for management to respond to emergencies on the Preserve. Such emergencies could include response to wildfires, wildlife problems reported by neighbors and illegal trespass.
- 3. Nature Walks** The Preserve manager send out a brochure to the neighbors in the area and conduct a nature walk.

E. REPORTING

Activities included within reporting requirements include the management of the Preserve's database/GIS system, the photo-documentation stations, and the production of various status reports to the USFWS, CDFG and CNLM administration.

1. Database/GIS Management

Data derived from routine patrols and photo-documentation will be entered into and maintained in the Preserve's existing database/GIS system. Additional databases will be established for the various biotic monitoring programs including the production of historical and current vegetation maps. Efforts will be made to coordinate and standardize database fields and parameters with other reserves.

2. Photo-documentation Stations

Photo-documentation stations were created in 2003. Photo's will be taken at these stations every three years. Photo-stations need to be created at the greens parcels in 2004.

3. Reports

- a. Year-End/Agency Reports** By the end of November 2004, a year-end report will be prepared by the Preserve manager detailing the results of the year's management activities. This report will include recommendations for the continuation of various activities for the following fiscal year and will be submitted to the USFWS and CDFG as required under permit reporting conditions.
- b. 2004-2005 Annual Work Plan** The work plan for the 2004-2005 fiscal year will be formulated by the end of the 2003-2004 fiscal year and will be based upon experiences during previous years' operations. This work plan will be submitted to the USFWS and CDFG.
- c. Management Plan** The Management Plan for this site was produced in August of 2001, and was reviewed and approved by the USFWS and CDFG. However, this report only covered the properties of La Costa Villages, not University Commons. The Management Plan will be updated with all properties as soon as all parcels and endowments are received.

F. OFFICE MAINTENANCE

Preserve Management will maintain offices in an organized manner to facilitate maximum efficiency. This section of the budget includes outlays for general office work, utilities, telephones, etc.

G. OPERATIONS

Operations include the training and professional growth of Preserve Management personnel, and

inspection of the Preserve by CNLM administration. Funds have been allocated in the current budget for both the Preserve Manager to attend classes or seminars during the 2003-2004 year. Also included within this category of activity is the conduction of employee reviews.

III. WORKLOAD AND BUDGETS

A. SUPERVISION & STAFFING

The Preserve Manager will be supervised by the Center's Science Director, Michael Robson. Tasks and hours will be coordinated by the Preserve Manager and approved by the Science Director.

B. BUDGETING

A budget has been prepared for the 2003-2004 year and is included here as Appendix 2. Every effort will be made by Preserve Management to allocated time and expenses according to this estimated budget. The budget for this fiscal year is \$127,597 based on summing three project areas (La Costa Villages, University Commons and Elfin Forest (University Commons)) and the total endowment left over for these three project areas as of August, 2003 is \$1,676,143 (more funds and land to be received in 2004).

IV. Appendices

Appendix 1.

Appendix 2.

Budgets

Appendix 3.

Preserve Location Maps